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HOMEMAKERS'S CHAT

Friday, July 26, 1940

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "MANAGING THE REFRIGERATOR." Information from the Bureau of Home Economics, U. S. Department of Agriculture.

--ooOoo--

Today I'd like to tell you about one of my friends who used to spend most of the summer keeping her family away from the refrigerator. The children and their friends loved to "raid the ice box." Of course, their mother didn't mind having them get something to eat--but she did mind having them leave the refrigerator door open for 15 minutes at a time, while they were making sandwiches. And after they left the kitchen, she'd come in to find the caps off the milk bottles--butter left out on the work table--food spilled on the bottom of the refrigerator--and everything in disorder.

And here's how she solved the problem. At one of the family councils, she explained the importance of managing the refrigerator.....Told them that the refrigerator was a storage place for perishable foods, and had to be kept in good order if it is to do its job properly. The children picked up the idea and made out a set of rules-do's and don'ts to remember when they were using the refrigerator.

The first rule was--don't open the refrigerator door any more than necessary. My friend told the family that warm air rushes into the cabinet each time the door is opened. Then the refrigerator must use energy to chill this warm air, and it costs money to cool air in the refrigerator. (That waste of money argument made a strong impression on the youngsters, because they each have their own weekly allowance.)

She told them that if they figured ahead and used the work table right near the refrigerator, they could take all the food out in one trip and put it all back

in another. And they were never to leave the door open for any length of time.

The second rule was--Do put food back in its proper place, not just hit-or-miss. You see, the refrigerator maintains a temperature of about 50 degrees F. in most parts. But there are one or two extra cold spots for keeping the very perishable foods--the dairy products and uncooked meats. Bacteria will grow on them very quickly, unless you keep these foods as cold as possible.

The coldest spot is usually just beside or just below the freezing unit or the ice. And most refrigerators now on the market have the shelves arranged so milk bottles and meat can be conveniently kept in these coldest spots.

Of course, the rule for keeping dairy products in the coldest possible place also applies to cooked foods containing milk....that is, milk desserts such as custards and puddings, and milk in left-over creamed vegetables and sauces.

The rest of the foods that go into the refrigerator can be placed wherever it is convenient. If you buy eggs in a paper carton, it's best to take them out and put them in a bowl or wire basket. Vegetables that you want to serve cold and crisp in salad should be washed and kept in a covered vegetable pan. Fruits that are "dead ripe" may also be kept in the refrigerator to slow down decay. And berries and cherries need special care because they mold quickly when warm or damp. So it's best to spread them out on a tray, and cover them lightly with paraffin paper.

After you've once decided where you want to keep the different foods in the refrigerator, see that they are always put back in the same place. Then you'll save hunting on different shelves to find a certain food.

Now let's go on, the third rule worked out by the family I was telling you about. It concerned covers for food. My friend explained that the covers are used on food in a refrigerator for a definite purpose.

Milk bottles are capped to keep out dirt, and to keep the milk from taking up odors from other foods. Butter is kept in a covered dish for the same reason.

Left-over meats and vegetables are kept in covered dishes to keep the odor from spreading to other foods. Fruit juices are covered to keep out air and cut down the loss of vitamin C. Salad vegetables are kept in a covered crisping pan to keep them from becoming wilted.

And here's the fourth rule. Don't put anything in the refrigerator that will warm it up--unless it is absolutely necessary. No paper bags, no extra containers, no hot dishes, and no foods that do not need refrigeration. By the way, that's one of the rules that my friend said she'd have to remember herself. She has formed the habit of bringing food home from the grocery store and putting it all away in the refrigerator. She realized that there was no need to use the refrigerator for fruits that she was going to use almost at once--or for vegetables, such as carrots and turnips, that will keep at room temperature. She'd come to realize she was wasting money by making her refrigerator cool paper bags and vegetables that didn't need refrigeration.

And the last rule was on cleanliness--do wipe up food as soon as it is spilled. This spilled food looks untidy, and it is a good place for bacteria to grow. Besides it is much harder to clean later on. The children agreed that this rule was so important that there ought to be a penalty for anybody who broke it. So their mother suggested that the offender take over the weekly cleaning of the refrigerator.

She told them that this weekly cleaning meant defrosting the refrigerator and taking out all the food.....then washing the inside of the cabinet--the shelves--the containers--and the evaporator.

That's the story of refrigerator management--as one woman worked it out. But the rules I've passed on to you, will work for any family with any kind of a refrigerator.

